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# 8<sup>th</sup> Conference on Sri Lanka – Japan Collaborative Research – 2023

Addressing global issues through collaboration and partnership

## Book of Abstracts

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University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

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## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN JAFFNA DISTRICT

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**Abstract:** The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 had a profound impact on fluctuations in marketing, of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and compelling businesses and brands to re-evaluate their thinking about present and future marketing strategies to maintain a steady stream of income. While marketing strategies currently seek to strike the right tone during a global health emergency, the future portends market alteration, increased competition, and a demand for creative and aggressive marketing practices for SMEs. There is a theoretical gap identified in analyzing the impact of marketing strategies on SMEs in the Jaffna district. SMEs are major contributing sectors in a global economy, but the nature of the reality is different in Sri Lanka, especially in the Jaffna district. This study aimed to identify the marketing impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in the Jaffna District in Sri Lanka. A qualitative method was used to collect data from 30 SMEs in Jaffna District. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify the respondents involved in marketing activities in SMEs. Thematic analysis was employed to identify the marketing impact of COVID-19 on SMEs. Finally, five themes such as product, price, promotion, distribution, people, process, physical evidence, and consumer behavior impacts on SMEs in Jaffna district were identified through data analysis. The findings of the study show that COVID-19 mitigating protocols and mechanisms caused to increase the economic and individual costs which have a negative influence on the SMEs operating in Jaffna. SMEs are economically fragile and facing several difficulties, including a lack of materials, a decline in demand for their products and services locally and globally, difficulties in paying back loans and interest, struggling with liquid cash (including issues with payroll and utility bills), difficulties in recalling employees to work, and a lack of new orders. Moreover, many SMEs were thinking of temporarily closing down. SMEs adopt the following marketing strategies to manage the impact of COVID-19 on their marketing activities. The periphery of Jaffna and its sensitive marketing in SMEs can be achieved by adapting to evolving market dynamics. Data analysis from the informant's speech remarks revealed the following sub-themes under the marketing strategies such as Relationship marketing strategies, Case-related marketing strategies, Social marketing strategies, and Influential marketing strategies. The capacity development programme for SMEs is one of the finest policy implementations initiated by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to re-build robust SMEs.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Marketing Strategies, SMEs, Consumer Behavior, Jaffna District